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**CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee
Public Hearing – March 25, 2022**

Recommend Changes to Raised Bill SB 470

**Raised Bill SB 470 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE
AND OTHER ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING CERTAIN VOTER
REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND REJECTED ABSENTEE BALLOTS.**

**Submitted by Pua Ford, Public Issues Team
League of Women Voters of Connecticut**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-named bill. We applaud the intent to cure a rejected absentee ballot, but the method described in SB 470 as written is seriously flawed. We recommend that this be revised—in consultation with Registrars of Voters and Town Clerks—to be practicable on Election Day.

Section 2 of the bill, as we understand it, outlines how some rejected Absentee Ballots may be “cured” and allow the voter an opportunity to cast a vote in person at her or his polling place.

Our first suggestion is to remove “and the League of Women Voters” from line 20. Whether the intended group is the state or local LWV, we are unlikely to have resources to contribute to the process. We are surprised and honored that the bill’s author recognizes our nonpartisan interest in the voting process and our goal of making voting easier and more available, but we must decline this role. Many of our active members already work in their local polls in various official capacities.

This is how we understand the proposed process:

1. Before and during an election, primary, or referendum, the municipal clerk receives Absentee Ballots (ABs), checks them from the list of ABs that were issued, delivers those ABs to the polling place or central AB counting place under supervision of a moderator and registrars of voters.
2. ABs that the clerk has delivered to the registrars during that day are checked by the registrars, who turned them over to the AB counters.

3. In the process of opening the outer envelopes, the AB counters may discover problems within; two are referenced in the bill by some statutes:
 - a. The inner envelope was not signed by the voter, or
 - b. The voter (who may not have voter in person before this event) did not put a copy of proper identification in the outer envelope, outside the inner envelope.
4. In those cases, the counters mark the outer envelope “REJECTED” and (*new process!*) send those rejected ABs back to the registrars.
5. The registrars contact *someone else* (town committees or LWV) to contact the voter and let them know about the problem with the AB and give them an opportunity to vote in person at their polling place.

Problems:

1. Another reason for rejection is not mentioned in this bill: Two inner envelopes, each with an AB from an individual in the same household as the other, are placed in one outer envelope. This saves postage (if mailed), but currently invalidates the AB of the voter whose name is not on the outer envelope. If SB 470 can be amended to make the process feasible, the rejected AB voter should have the same opportunity to correct their error.
2. The town committees might have an unofficial checker process to remind people to vote or to offer rides to the polls. They get this contact information get from the registrars or municipal clerk. However:
 - a. Those committees may not have that process for referenda, so they would not be able to make contact easily or be willing to reach out. If there are other groups with unofficial checkers (e.g., a volunteer Fire Association or Parent-Teacher Organization), those organizations might fill that role.
 - b. Many voters no longer volunteer their telephone number on their registration application. They have good reasons to guard their privacy, but the registrars already have problems contacting people who need to correct their registration. For town committees or whoever is designated to contact the voter about their AB, that would mean someone knocking on a door, perhaps to discover that the voter is out of town or ill or worried about strangers knocking.
3. The League of Women Voters, local or state, does not maintain voter information.
4. SB 470 sets “six o’clock p.m.” as the deadline for curable ABs to be delivered to the registrars. Discovering a problem with an AB might happen so soon before the close of polls at 8:00 p.m., that it would be impossible to contact the voter and help them to vote in person. Would the contacting organization even make the effort? A better deadline might be 3:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m.

The League of Women Voters supports having a process in place to cure rejected absentee ballots. We urge the legislature to work with experienced election officials to identify a practical and effective process and implement it. In the meantime, the League will continue our work alerting voters on the correct use of absentee ballots and any updates to elections laws. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comment on this bill.